SUM. 96

Historical Society of Palm Desert

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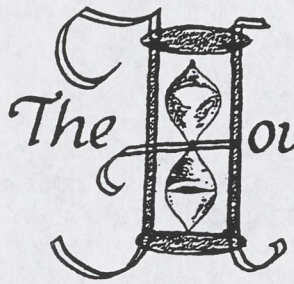

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SUMMER 1996 VOL. 4, NO. 2

FOUNDER'S DAY 1996
Kermit O. Martin, recipient

Fifty years ago on May 15 Cliff Henderson broke ground for the new community of Palm Desert. The annual awards party has been one of the most pleasant events of springtime for the past dozen years. Sponsored by the Historical Society, ably and charmingly presented by Marion Henderson, widow of the founder, it recognizes individuals who have given outstanding service in the community.

In that regard, Kermit has achieved a record second to none. Since moving here in 1963 with wife, Jean, and their son and daughter, he has given signal service in many volunteer positions. Kermit took over as manager of the Edison Company office when it was in the old AIRLANSEA building and remained with Edison until retirement in 1994.

Kermit became a Toastmaster and member of the Palm Desert Community Library Association soon after joining the Palm Desert Rotary in 1964. He served as Rotary president in 1971-72 and received the Paul Harris Fellowship in 1978. He was the first director of the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce in 1965 and twice its president in 1970 and 1975. Kermit also chaired Midsummer Madness in the '70s. It turned into the now famous Golf Cart Parade.

He was a Desert Sands School Board member and president, 1973-76 and served on the Personnel Commission for several years. He was a founding member of the YMCA in 1977, and active in planning the Palm Desert Park and youth facilities. United Way of Coachella Valley also has benefitted from Kermit's efforts, as Business Chairman for Palm Desert and Indian Wells.

In the 90s the pace has not slowed down for the youthful Kermit. Since 1994, he has a second career with Waste Management of the Desert. His volunteer activities continue, as well, and include: helping to reactivate the Historical Society, board member of the YMCA, vice-chairman of Desert Sands School Building Corporation, chairman of the Palm Desert Economic Development Committee (he's been active with that group since 1968!) He helps with United Way gourmet dinners; it would be worth the tab to have Kermit as your waiter at one of those events.

Friends who gathered to see him receive the Founder's Day plaque agreed that it was a stellar choice for a stellar public servant. Congratulations, Kermit, you're part of history! Warm and fuzzy feelings prevailed.

HSPD-PUBLICATIONS-NEWSLETTER
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Second Annual WESTERN PIT BARBECUE - April 13, 1996

A pre-event notice in the Desert Sun's weekly entertainment supplement listed the BBQ as a hot ticket item. And so it was! Original art work on name tags by Ginny Folkers identified all the guys and gals. Caroll Davis (a Reba Mcintyre look alike) assisted by son Brent and friend Shannon brought the west alive with line dancing. Some of the wannabe line dancers were a bit intimidated to find themselves on stage for their instruction, but everyone had FUN. Unquenchable Caroll soon had all the diners in motion at their tables doing a vigorous hand/arm routine to Mas Carina. A tip of the sombrero to Dick Kelly and Dick Folkers, who entered fully into the spirit of the occasion!

The Shriners again outdid themselves with a wonderful chuckwagon menu. Several people purchased extra BBQ beef to enjoy at home, it was that good! Best, always, is the camaraderie of good friends steeped in recall of the way things were and exchanging information of who's where now and what's happening.

Special thanks to all who supported this fund-raiser, and thanks to both the Post and the Sun for good coverage to promote the event. Hope to see you next year at the BBQ.....perhaps a different venue? We're always looking for a setting that resonates history. Please give us your suggestions.

P.S. Maria Keezer was the winner of a two-night stay for two at the Avi Hotel and Casino near Laughlin, Nevada and $100 gambling money. We caught up with husband, Roger, after the trip and he reported a great time at this beautiful, very private retreat. He said the food was excellent and they had the best breakfasts ever.....no big winnings, but a fun time!

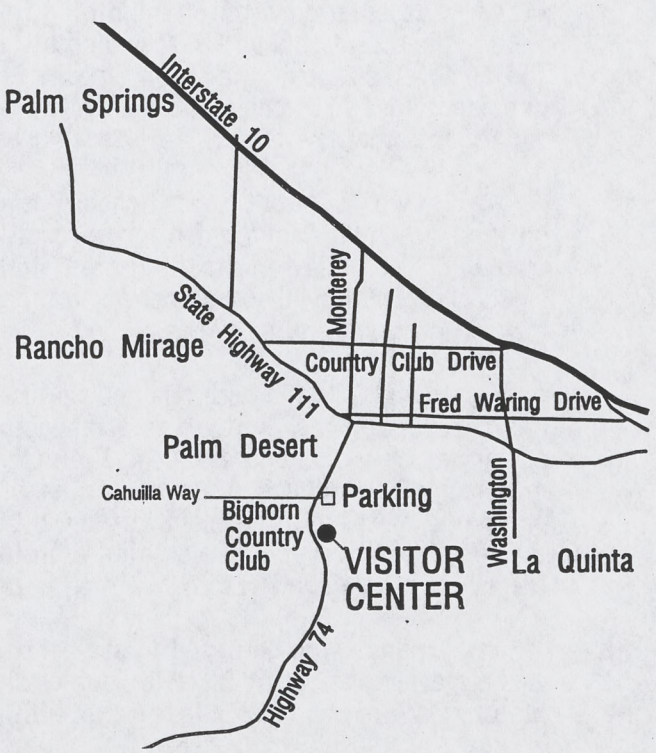
SANTA ROSA MOUNTAINS NATURAL SCENIC AREA VISITOR CENTER

The official opening of this gem of a resource center was held recently. It is located just 3-1/2 miles up Highway 74.

Signs caution: "As you explore this area remember to TREAD LIGHTLY....take nothing but photographs and memories .....leave nothing but foot prints."

Inside the handsome stone structure you will find photographic displays, information and exhibits. It is a great place to take family and visitors of all ages. Not to reveal too much, but do check out the discovery drawers (just the right height for children) and the wall which has push button lights to show 20 points of interest in color. The Historical Society of Palm Desert is one of them.

The Visitor Center has a commanding view of the valley floor. Docent/volunteers are doing a great job tending the natural plantings, developing trails, etc. They had some beautiful stands of vari-colored mallow this spring. Put this on your must see list!



NEW BOOKLET AND NOTE CARDS AVAILABLE

An interesting booklet and set of note cards featuring historic places using photographs provided by the Society was introduced at the Barbecue in April. PRIDE IN PROGRESS, the booklet, was produced by authors Julie Hector, Sheila R. Gilligan, Jean M. Benson and Jan Holmlund. These items are available for sale at the Society office on El Paseo for $5.00 each or $9.95 for book and cards.

Sales of the DREAM TO REALITY video are picking up. One glowing response came from William H. Tourelle of Short Hills, N. J. who visited last year. Thanks, Bill!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

George & Gale Cunningham
David & Maralyn Porter
Velma Dawson
Jim & Shirley McClellan
Dan & Carol Scanny
Iris Herbekian
Sue Zander
Donald J. Kohout

Welcome back: Pomona First Federal Bank/Trust, Carolyn Hagan, V.P./Branch Manager

HISTORY OF AN INTERESTING ADOBE DWELLING

The original Cavanagh adobe is now owned by Mr. & Mrs. Donald E. Hutton. It is one of the oldest buildings in the valley which still retains the look of the lifestyle and culture of residents living three-quarters of a century ago.

The house is located on the east side of Cook Street just south of Highway 111. The Cavanagh brothers, H. L. and Albert (both now deceased), purchased 20 acres from C. E. Cook, father of the late Supervisor William Cook. A frame house on 160 acres on the northwest corner of the intersection was owned by Cook, and he bought an additional 160 acres across Highway 111 and divided it into 10-acre tracts of which the Cavanagh brothers bought two.

The brothers retained H. Addison Sanders to draw a sketch according to their specifications and do the basic construction for the house, which began in 1922. Bert did most of the finish work. It took several years before the house was completed.

The floors were poured concrete slabs with a second concrete layer on top which was dyed with colors taken from pottery shards. In some rooms the concrete was marked off in 12" x 12" tile shapes. Cavanagh stated that when it was waxed, it looked like polished leather.

Mexicans were hired to make adobe bricks from material obtained at the old Peterson Ranch on Washington Street. Bricks measuring 4" thick x 12" wide x 18" long were made and laid at the Cook Street site at a cost of $55 per thousand. For the walls on the first floor level, the bricks were laid side-by-side resulting in an 18" thick wall. For the 12" thick walls at the second floor level, they were laid end-to-end. "The walls were so thick and the adobe so efficient," stated H. L. Cavanagh, "that when we closed and shuttered the windows, our home was comfortably cool throughout the hot summer days."

The Cavanagh brothers built the house for their own personal residence. The first floor layout included a living room, den, large kitchen, bathroom and a breakfast room. Later, the entrance porch was enclosed to provide more living space. The second floor had two bedrooms and a bathroom. In addition the portion of the first story roof, which was exposed, was used a a sleeping deck in the summertime. The deck was later converted to living area.

Roof tiles were added several years later by Joe Valenzuela who lived in La Quinta. The tiles were handmade over a man's thigh. Joe made most of the tiles in the desert at that time, and his original tiles can still be seen on the roof and floors of the La Quinta Hotel.

The ceiling in the living room was supported by hand-hewn 12" x 12" natural timbers. The house was heated by a fireplace in the living room which was built by Henry Neilsen, a Swede who built "the finest fireplaces in the valley," according to Bert Cavanagh. The fireplace was constructed around four-foot timbers.

After the brothers lived in the house for four or five years, Albert married and occupied the house with his wife. In 1930-31 Bert built a second house, a one-story adobe, on the property behind his brother's house for himself and his wife. The Cavanaghs also built a small adobe on the east side of their property for the ranch foreman. In 1934-35 Albert left the area and sold his share of the property to Bert. In 1942-43 Bert Cavanagh sold the two-story adobe to H. O Davis and the second adobe to Gwynn Wilson. Both were involved in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games. In the 1940s Davis sold the two-story and its 10 acres to Charley Burley, who in turn sold it to Ford Hermanson in the 1950s.

In 1944 Slim and Fay Bowie moved into the small adobe which had been built for the ranch foreman. Mrs. Bowie remembers that the date trees on the property at that time were as high as the one-story adobe. Date production ceased when irrigation of the grove was halted in 1988. Bert Cavanagh recalled that when Buzby Berkeley used the property to make a film with the Dead End Kids, they included in the location setting John Beck's little date shop on the property frontage.

In 1945 Wilson built a house for the hired help and a barn at the back of his 10 acres. Mexican workers lived in this house and Mrs. Bowie recalls their habit of singing early in the morning.

At that time Cook Street was a tiny two-rutted road. When the H. L. Cavanaghs lived in the one-story adobe, Bert Cavanagh remembered Highway 111 was not surfaced from Palm Desert to Palm Springs, so only about six cars passed by each day.

Through the years certain refinements were added, such as central air-conditioning/ heating, city gas and a revised in-house water supply system. The present owners remodeled the dining room and updated the kitchen being careful not to alter the original walls and doorways in any way.

Cavanagh Adobe - construction began in 1922

GIFTS IN MEMORY OF FAY BOWIE have been received from:

Chris Couston	Mr. & Mrs. Edwin Lundquist	Mr. & Mrs. Ed Mullins
Beverly J. Riley	Mr. & Mrs. Perry Sheneman	Jean Ann Hirschi

A PALM DESERT FIRST FAMILY, with a Touch of Royalty

The recent death of Nina Mae Roper Taylor stirred memories of a time before there was a Palm Desert.

Nina Mae Roper and Luther Taylor married in 1929 in Mountain View, Arkansas. Luther worked in the Coachella Valley on the Cavanagh ranches before signing on to Cliff Henderson's dream. The couple lived in a house in the area which later became the Palm Desert Town Center. Bob Keedy recalls that a few years after occupying that single dwelling, Luther and his family moved into Palm Village.

Luther was someone least likely to be thought of with a scepter in his hand or to be in command. A man of the soil, the rod he did wield was a dowsing rod. He located WATER for the development of Shadow Mountain Club and worked with Cliff during construction of the Club, later becoming superintendent of the Palm Village Water and Land Company. The pipe laid in those days was all government war surplus and, as the years went by, maintenance was an ongoing challenge. Luther was there to handle every problem. Long time friend, Ed Mullins, remembers him as "one of the nicest guys in the world.....quiet, unassuming, reliable" -- a builder of community who stayed in the background, never sought the limelight; but, nonetheless, played a key role.

Four beautiful daughters were born to the union of Luther and Nina Mae -- Mildred, Norma Jean, Nadine and Lorelle. They grew up here, and three of them still make the valley their home. All attended Palm Desert Schools and Coachella Valley High School.

Lorelle Taylor Young, who supplied information for this item, was one of about a dozen students of Washington School's first 8th-grade graduation class. A group photo shows Lorelle along with her sister, Nadine, and a Historical Society board member, Gary Olesen. In her high school years Lorelle reigned for a year as Queen Scheherezade of the Riverside County Fair and National Date Festival -- so there really was royalty in the family!

Speaking fondly of her folks -- her dad died in 1990 and her mother in April of this year, Lorelle said both lived into their eighties and had gone way past a golden anniversary. "My dad got a lot of his strength from my mother," she added.

We salute these pioneers and acknowledge their important contribution to the world class resort whose history we strive to preserve.

IN MEMORIAM:

Frances Bomhard	Jean Goldmann	George Ritter
Fay Bowie	Margaret Kay	Nina Mae Taylor
Ellene V. Browning	Don McNeilly	

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF DONATIONS - Many thanks!

Doug' & Sandy Keedy: Microwave. Responded to wish list in last Hourglass. We love 'em.
Milton Page: Photo of old Rancho Palm Springs, now Eldorado Country Club
Rick Lopez: An Eldorado Country Club book covering years 1957-85
Sally Emore: Several years of Desert Magazine

PRESIDENT BOB KEEDY entered Eisenhower intensive care unit the Monday before Memorial Day with symptoms of heart failure. His family is with him and friends' thoughts and prayers surround them.

[redacted]

Palm Desert Historical Society
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SUMMER PLANS

The Historical Society office will be closed to the public during July and August, reopening Tuesday, September 3, for the customary 3-day a week schedule.

Have a great summer!!

"Hourglass" editor,
Theda Lundquist